



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

Can't beat the heat! The warm temperatures over the past week kept many fish from biting, but with the turn in the weather, let's hope next week scores a much larger catch! Despite the heat, Spanish mackerel are biting well, and offshore, tuna and marlin are still being hooked on a regular basis. In the Middle Bay area, the big news is the arrival of Spanish mackerel. Have a great week!

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

At Captain Bob's, Donna reports good fishing for small species such as spot and kingfish. Larger kingfish are available outside of the inlet between Buoys 6 and 8, Marker 15, and in the Assateague Channel. While spot are consistent everywhere, croaker are not. Croaker have been spotty all season. Offshore, bluefin tuna action continues at the Lumpy Bottom. Also from that area, king mackerel, cobia, wahoo, and dolphin were reported. For the large dolphin, anglers have to go closer to the canyon. Chunking is still the preferred method for tuna fishing. The wrecks are loaded with fish, but spadefish are finicky about hitting bait. Donna suggests it could be the loads of jellyfish floating around that are keeping them occupied.

### **Wachapreague**

According to staff at Captain Zed's, offshore action is really great. The Lumpy Bottom and the 20-Fathom Line seem to be the best places for numerous bluefin tuna in the 75-to 85-pound range. Occasionally, a yellowfin tuna has been caught there as well. The marlin tournament this week yielded a citation bluefin (107.2 pounds), and a 47-pound wahoo was also caught at 20-fathoms. A 36-pound dolphin was one of numerous dolphin caught at the Washington Canyon. Four white marlin releases were reported from the same area. Inland, anglers are hooking flounder (the season is closed until July 30). The best areas for bottom fishing include Cedar Island and near the Coast Guard Station. Other catches include croaker, spot, and kingfish.

## **Onancock**

Bottom fishing is doing well except during the heat of the day, according to Captain Wil of Onancock. Anglers have to fish deep (60 feet of water) to find temperatures that fish are comfortable with. Last week produced some nice catches of flounder, from anglers working with the tides. Most fish are biting very early or very late in the day. Captain Wil reports that this is normal summer fishing with a lot of heat.

## **Cape Charles**

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, last week's citations include a 7-pound, 11-ounce flounder caught at buoy 42 A on the 20<sup>th</sup>, a 96-inch shark release, and a speckled trout citation caught near Oyster. At the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, cobia are starting to show, and spadefish are biting well at the Cell. Near Oyster, croaker fishing has been productive.

Latimer Shoals produced some citation fish according to staff at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle. A 48.5-inch red drum, a 57-inch cobia, and a 52-inch cobia were all hooked there this week. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, an 8-pound, 15-ounce flounder was also hooked in the lower Chesapeake Bay. Staff reports that overall, fishing is improving for the Bay.

## **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

At Cobb's Marina, fishing was slow last week. There was one red drum release citation on the 17<sup>th</sup> for a 51-inch fish caught at the second island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Croaker are biting throughout the area, and spadefish are stacked at the pilings.

According to staff at Sunset Boating Center, anglers are catching Spanish mackerel near Cape Henry. A 5-pound flounder was also caught at the Buoy 42. Croaker and spot were biting at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, and spadefish are active at Thimble Shoals and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Massive amounts of flounder are reported at Salt Ponds Marina (keep in mind the season is closed until July 30). Croaker are biting everywhere, and staff has heard reports of small shark and spadefish.

Staff at the York River Fishing Center reports very poor fishing this weekend. The flounder bite has slowed considerably, but the keeper ratio was better at about 5 to 1. Croaker and spot were biting in the York River. No reports of grey trout yet, but they are expected soon.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

The flounder season is closed thru July 30. Prior to the closure, flounder fishing was very good, and it should be again when the season reopens. While we wait for the flounder season to open, there are plenty of other things to fish for. Spadefish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT), at the Cell, and at the Tower Reef. Some large sheepshead are available at the CBBT. Large red drum are roaming the shoals at the mouth of the bay. They can be caught anchored up and fishing bait on the bottom or by sight-casting to schools. Big black drum are swimming around the islands of the CBBT. Cobia can be caught on a chum slick or by sight-casting. Cobia are being

encountered along the oceanfront, the CBBT, and around buoys in the lower bay and ocean. Anglers are having some success with king mackerel off of Sandbridge. While fishing for kings, they are also catching some large Spanish mackerel, cobia, and sharks. Amberjack fishing is still very good at the South Tower. Offshore fishing is mixed. Yellowfin tuna are still very scarce. Decent numbers of bluefin tuna are around on the Fingers, and the Lumpy Bottom has been producing good numbers of bluefin. Billfish and dolphin action is good. The wahoo bite has picked up, and large tilefish and grouper are being caught by anglers bottom fishing around the Norfolk Canyon.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The mid-summer bite is on, and two of the most esteemed Virginia species are taking the spotlight. The elusive Virginia tarpon is making an unheard of emergence with multiple landings this week. The most amazing catch was made by a lone boater live-baiting off of False Cape. Keith Cole of Virginia Beach landed the catch of a lifetime when a 78-inch tarpon crashed his bait. After a two hour battle, the fish came to net and was quickly measured and released. This is one of several reported tarpon hookups off the Virginia coast. The folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle convey that an exceptional number of tarpon are also coming from the usual holes on the Eastern Shore. At least eight silver kings were landed lately, with most coming from near Ship Shoal Inlet using live bait. King mackerel are also making an extraordinary introduction as boats scramble to get in on this exciting bite along the Virginia Beach shoreline. Many boats are experiencing multiple hook-ups with most fish ranging around 20 pounds. A few scattered fish are pushing over 30-pounds. Trollers in the same areas are also picking up some nice Spanish mackerel, with a few fish noted over four pounds in the mix. Cobia are making a good late season comeback for chummers. Boats anchored off of Fisherman's Island are hooking into good numbers of fish averaging around 40 pounds using eels and fresh bunker in a chum slick. Big red drum are also taking bait intended for these cobia, but no one is complaining. Several big cobia are taking baits from anglers casting at inshore buoys along the beach this week. Large schools of bull reds swimming on the surface are becoming more common in the lower bay, making easy casting targets. Boats are reporting multiple hookups of citation reds this week. Anglers are still picking away at pods of black drum roaming the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Storm lures and buck tails are the lures of choice, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands producing the best numbers. Spadefish are more predictable lately, but the run of the larger fish is over. Most boats are content tangling with 6- to 8-pounders along the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands, and several inshore wrecks and navigational beacons. Clams and clam-flavored Fishbites are working well. With flounder off limits until the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, anglers are keeping busy with triggerfish. A large run of these feisty little fish are making anglers take notice. Triggers are easy to catch, and will hit squid, clams, live bait, cut bait, or anything that is within easy reach. Although a few fish are coming from the Bay Bridge Tunnel complex, the incredible sheepshead bite of years past may be just that. It is already late into July and the numbers are still way behind. Croaker are everywhere from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The best hauls are coming from the backwaters of Oyster, where a handful of anglers are earning citations for tipping the scales over the 3-pound mark. The spot run seems promising this year, with nice fish already showing within Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are also offering action in the same locations, where several pups measuring up to 30 inches are hitting cut and live mullet. Speckled trout are also a possibility. Amberjack are taking most any live bait offered at offshore wrecks and the South Tower, with a good run of larger fish. Take plenty of bait, and plan for a full day if you make the run south. The

offshore action is still on the upswing, with several boats returning with multiple white marlin releases and big bull dolphin catches. Big wahoo are also making a showing.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

The news in this region of the Chesapeake Bay is that the Spanish mackerel are here. Reports indicate the Spanish are working around deeper areas of water, just outside the shipping channel around Buoy 62, and the mouths of the rivers. Tailor blues are mixed in with the Spanish mackerel as well. Small croaker are still abundant, and the spot seem to be getting bigger.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports that it was a great week for fishing. The Cell is producing flounder around the 20 inch size (although the season is closed until July 30). The rivers, both the Rappahannock and Piankatank, are producing vast numbers of spot, medium croaker, flounder, and sea mullet. Bluefish are consistent, and anglers have had success with cut bait or squid. The places to be are Cherry Point, the Number 5 marker, the Mudhole in the Piankatank, the Rappahannock, the Spike, Butlers Hole, and the Windmill Point drop off. Gwynn Island, close to deep water, is also preferred. Anglers targeting spot need plenty of large blood worms, because fish bites or other artificial baits are competing. Spanish mackerel are there, but not in real numbers. This year, there is an increase in bluefish.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spot are biting well, and the catch includes a few #1 sized fish. Fish are being caught at Cherry Point, off of Gwynn's Island in 25 to 30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. Large croaker are available east of Buoy 42 including some fish up to 16 inches in length. Commercial netters are also active in the area. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are available near Buoy 41A, around the Cell, and along the drop off at Windmill Bar. Five citation flounder were weighed this week. Flounder at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area were inconsistent, likely due to the full moon. Limits of fish were caught one day, and pickings were slim the next. Small to medium spadefish continue to bite at the Cell and at Wolftrap Light. A speckled trout citation was brought in this week from the North River. Small red drum are also available in the creeks and along shorelines mixed with croaker, spot, and small striped bass. There are still no reports of cobia in the area.

### **Virginia Beach**

Numerous Spanish mackerel and taylor bluefish were reported from the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. A lot of shark and large cobia were reported as well. Offshore, gaffer and bull dolphin have been biting. White marlin is also doing well, and the bluefin and yellowfin tuna bite continues (all reports are over 50 pounds). Most of this action was reported at the Norfolk Canyon.

According to staff at Fisherman's Wharf Marina, Spanish mackerel are doing really well right off of the beach. Offshore, there has been a nice marlin bite (mostly white marlin, with a few blue mixed in), with dolphin biting as well. Some of the bluefin action has moved north.

### **Virginia Piers**

Spot, croaker, flounder, and a few Spanish mackerel are biting at the Ocean View Pier. As long as the tide is

moving, fishing is doing well, according to staff.

At the Lynnhaven Pier this week, anglers have caught numerous spot, sea mullet, and flounder. Taylor bluefish and Spanish mackerel have also been biting. Crabbing has been wonderful, with numerous large crabs in the mix.

Sea mullet, Spanish mackerel, two king mackerel, bluefish, and a few spot were hooked at the Virginia Beach Pier this week. Generally, incoming and high tide are the best to be fishing. The sea mullet and spot are biting at night, while the mackerel and bluefish are active during the day.

Anglers at the Sandbridge Pier prefer bloodworms and squid for their catches this week. King mackerel, small flounder, bluefish, spot, and sea mullet comprised this week's landings.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

From Nags Head, offshore the fishing slowed a bit with only small amounts of dolphin, wahoo, and a few species of tuna being caught. However, the billfishing was good with all of the big three species represented (blue marlin, white marlin, and sailfish). Mid-range offshore fishing was also slow with only a few triggerfish, black sea bass, striped bass, king mackerel and cobia hooked. Inshore reports included flounder, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel. Surf fishermen had the best luck with sea mullet.

On the piers, Spanish mackerel and bluefish could be had using spoons, while bottom fishermen could catch flounder, sea mullet, croaker, spot, gray trout, and red drum. Cobia fishing was best at night.

People fishing in the sound and inlets had a lot of success with flounder as well as sea trout--both grays and specks--at Oregon Inlet's Green Island Slough. Large croaker, sea mullet, and spot could be found in numerous places.

South of Oregon Inlet large flounder could be found early in the weekend. Bluefish were mixed in as well. Ramps 49 and 38 were producing good-sized sea mullet and a few puppy drum. In the sounds, the puppy drum bite was solid. Later in the weekend, the wind began to pick up and the fishing slowed down with only a few reports of flounder and sheepshead around the jetties.

Out of Cape Hatteras, there was good fishing early in the weekend with dolphin, amberjack and wahoo, as well as a few sailfish. Fishing slowed down as the swell and wind moved in on Sunday. In the sounds, a few bluefish and cobia were keeping a few lucky angler's lines tight.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).












A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A prominent message states "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and explains that they are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. Another section titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists fishing regulations: Closed Season (May 1 through June 24), Minimum Size Limit (14 inches), and Possession Limit (4 per person). A statistics box on the left shows data for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, and Catches: 3,941. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and "Help" sections.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

*You catch it, you fillet it,*  
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

<b>COBIA</b>		<b>RED DRUM</b>	
<b>SHEEPSHEAD</b>		<b>BLACK DRUM</b>	
<b>SPADEFISH</b>		<b>TAUTOG</b>	
<b>TILEFISH</b>		<b>GROUPE</b>	
<b>KING MACKEREL</b>		<b>SPANISH MACKEREL</b>	
<b>BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)</b>			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**

**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)**

**Wachapreague Marina**

**Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)**

**Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

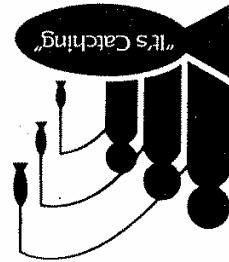
Website: [http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec\\_assessment/index.shtm](http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm)

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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**